

Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of managing user information in an instant messaging
2 (“IM”) system, comprising steps of:

3 determining, for an IM client that is operably connected to the IM system, whether any
4 of a plurality of users remembered by the IM client should be treated as expired; and

5 for each one of the plurality of users for whom the determining step determines that the
6 user is to be treated as expired, omitting ~~those users which are to be treated as expired~~ this user
7 when performing selected IM management functions of the IM system by automatically
8 remembering that this user is to be treated as expired but not deleting this user from the plurality
9 of users remembered by the IM client.

1 Claim 2 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the omitting step
2 omits each one of the determined users when performing presence determination.

1 Claim 3 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step further
2 comprises the step of using expiration criteria selected by a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 4 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step further
2 comprises the step of comparing a first date when an instant message last arrived from a
3 particular user to a second date selected by a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 5 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step further

2 comprises the step of determining whether an instant message last arrived from a particular user
3 more than a specified length of time before a current time.

1 Claim 6 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step further
2 comprises the step of comparing a first date when an instant message was last sent by a user of
3 the IM client to a particular user to a second date selected by the IM client user.

1 Claim 7 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step further
2 comprises the step of determining whether an instant message was last sent by a user of the IM
3 client user to a particular user more than a specified length of time before a current time.

1 Claim 8 (currently amended): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step
2 further comprises the step of selecting, by a user of the IM client, at least one or more of the
3 plurality of users that will then be automatically treated as currently expired.

1 Claim 9 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step is
2 performed by analyzing expiration information for each presently-unexpired user upon
3 occurrence of a configured interval.

1 Claim 10 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining and omitting
2 steps are also performed for user groups remembered by the IM client.

1 Claim 11 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the determining step uses
2 default expiration criteria and further comprising the step of enabling a user of the IM client to
3 selectively override the default expiration criteria.

1 Claim 12 (original): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 receiving an inbound message from a particular user who is being treated as expired; and
3 automatically treating the particular user as no longer expired, responsive to the
4 receiving step.

1 Claim 13 (original): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the steps of:
2 sending an outbound message from the IM client to a particular user who is being treated
3 as expired; and
4 automatically treating the particular user as no longer expired, responsive to the sending
5 step.

1 Claim 14 (original): The method according to Claim 1, further comprising the step of using a
2 distinct visual indicator for those users who are being treated as expired when presenting those
3 users' names on a display to a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 15 (original): The method according to Claim 1, wherein the users remembered by the
2 IM client are those users having entries in an address book used by the IM client.

1 Claim 16 (currently amended): A method of managing user information in an instant messaging
2 (“IM”) system, comprising steps of:

3 evaluating, for an IM client that is operably connected to the IM system, which of ~~[[the]]~~
4 a plurality of users remembered by the IM client should be treated as expired but not deleted
5 from the plurality of remembered users;

6 providing, for the IM client, a visual ~~[[an]]~~ indication for the remembered users, in which
7 each one of the plurality of ~~[[those]]~~ users ~~which are~~ for whom the evaluating step determines
8 that the user is to be treated as expired is visually indicated differently from ones of the plurality
9 of remembered users that are not to be treated as expired; and

10 charging a fee for carrying out the evaluating and providing steps.

1 Claim 17 (currently amended): A method of managing user information in an instant messaging
2 (“IM”) system, comprising steps of:

3 determining, for an IM client that is operably connected to the IM system, whether any
4 of a plurality of users remembered by the IM client should be treated as expired but not deleted
5 from the plurality of remembered users; and

6 for each one of the plurality of users for whom the determining step determines that the
7 user is to be treated as expired, providing a different visual representation for ~~the remembered~~
8 ~~users who are to be treated as expired~~ this user, as contrasted to the remembered users who are
9 not to be treated as expired, when displaying an IM client display comprising the remembered
10 users to a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 18 (original): The method according to Claim 17, wherein the different visual
2 representation comprises using an italicized font when displaying names or nicknames of the
3 remembered users who are to be treated as expired, as contrasted to a non-italicized font used
4 when displaying names or nicknames of the remembered users who are not to be treated as
5 expired.

1 Claim 19 (original): The method according to Claim 17, wherein the different visual
2 representation comprises automatically moving, to a selected location that is distinct from the
3 IM client display, the names or nicknames of the remembered users who are to be treated as
4 expired when displaying the IM client display to the IM client user.

1 Claim 20 (currently amended): A system for managing user information in an instant messaging
2 (“IM”) system, comprising:

3 an IM client operable on a computing device that is operably connected to the IM
4 system;

5 means for determining, for the IM client, whether any of a plurality of users remembered
6 by the IM client should be treated as expired; and

7 for each one of the plurality of users for whom the means for determining determines
8 that the user is to be treated as expired, means for omitting ~~those users which are to be treated~~
9 ~~as expired~~ this user when performing selected IM management functions of the IM system by
10 automatically remembering that this user is to be treated as expired but not deleting this user
11 from the plurality of users remembered by the IM client.

1 Claim 21 (currently amended): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for
2 omitting omits each one of the determined users when performing presence determination.

1 Claim 22 (original): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for determining
2 further comprises means for comparing a first date when an instant message last arrived from a
3 particular user to a second date selected by a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 23 (original): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for determining
2 further comprises means for determining whether an instant message last arrived from a
3 particular user more than a specified length of time before a current time.

1 Claim 24 (currently amended): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for
2 determining further comprises means for selecting, by a user of the IM client, at least one of the
3 plurality of ~~or more~~ users that will then be automatically treated as currently expired.

1 Claim 25 (original): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for determining is
2 performed upon occurrence of a scheduled action that analyzes expiration information for each
3 presently-unexpired user.

1 Claim 26 (original): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the means for determining and
2 means for omitting are also performed for user groups remembered by the IM client.

1 Claim 27 (original): The system according to Claim 20, further comprising:

2 means for receiving an inbound message from a particular user who is being treated as
3 expired; and

4 means for automatically treating the particular user as no longer expired, responsive to
5 the means for receiving.

1 Claim 28 (original): The system according to Claim 20, further comprising:

2 means for sending an outbound message from the IM client to a particular user who is
3 being treated as expired; and

4 means for automatically treating the particular user as no longer expired, responsive to
5 the means for sending.

1 Claim 29 (original): The system according to Claim 20, further comprising means for using a
2 distinct visual indicator for those users who are being treated as expired when presenting those
3 users' names on a display to a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 30 (original): The system according to Claim 20, wherein the users remembered by the
2 IM client are those users having entries in an address book used by the IM client.

1 Claim 31 (currently amended): A computer program product for managing user information in
2 an instant messaging ("IM") system, the computer program product embodied on one or more

3 computer-readable storage media and comprising:

4 computer-readable program code [[mean]] for determining, for an IM client that is
5 operably connected to the IM system, whether any of a plurality of users remembered by the IM
6 client should be treated as expired; and

7 for each one of the plurality of users for whom the computer-readable program code for
8 determining determines that the user is to be treated as expired, computer-readable program
9 code [[means]] for omitting ~~those users which are to be treated as expired~~ this user when
10 performing selected IM management functions of the IM system by automatically remembering
11 that this user is to be treated as expired but not deleting that user from the plurality of users
12 remembered by the IM client.

1 Claim 32 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for omitting omits each one of the determined
3 users when performing presence determination.

1 Claim 33 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining further comprises computer-
3 readable program code [[means]] for comparing a first date when an instant message was last
4 sent by a user of the IM client to a particular user to a second date selected by the IM client
5 user.

1 Claim 34 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein

2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining further comprises computer-
3 readable program code [[means]] for determining whether an instant message was last sent by a
4 user of the IM client user to a particular user more than a specified length of time before a
5 current time.

1 Claim 35 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining further comprises computer-
3 readable program code [means]] for selecting, by a user of the IM client, at least one of the
4 plurality of ~~or more~~ users that will then be automatically treated as currently expired.

1 Claim 36 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining further comprises:
3 computer-readable program code [[means]] for scheduling an expiration action for each
4 of one or more of the remembered users; and
5 computer-readable program code [[means]] for treating each of the remembered users as
6 expired upon executing the scheduled expiration action for that remembered user.

1 Claim 37 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining and the computer-readable
3 program code [[means]] for omitting are also performed for user groups remembered by the IM
4 client.

1 Claim 38 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein
2 the computer-readable program code [[means]] for determining uses default expiration criteria
3 and further comprising computer-readable program code [[means]] for enabling a user of the IM
4 client to selectively override the default expiration criteria.

1 Claim 39 (currently amended): The computer program product according to Claim 31, further
2 comprising computer-readable program code [[means]] for using a distinct visual indicator for
3 those users who are being treated as expired when presenting those users' names on a display to
4 a user of the IM client.

1 Claim 40 (original): The computer program product according to Claim 31, wherein the users
2 remembered by the IM client are those users having entries in an address book used by the IM
3 client.